178 788 though there have always been people who walked or rode donkeys. 556 441 The modern pilgrimage is usually made by truck, or by chartered plane from Maiduguri to Mecca. A wealthy man, and this usually [509] means someone engaged in trade, can travel to Mecca and back by plane for the sum of 120 pounds sterling.

4. The Social System.

177 178 Many of the political and economic changes brought about by the increasing integration of Kanuri culture within the greater orbit of Western culture have resulted in further internal changes within Kanuri life. These are clearly manifested in the shifting patterns of the social structure of modern Kanuri 175 565 society. At the time of the empire, before European contact, the aristocracy was a clearly defined social class whose membership exercised political power, controlled available sources of wealth, and enjoyed the prestige deriving from nobility of [554] family. These characteristics were unified and symbolized in a title conferred upon a man by the Shehu and inherited in a gen- 565 178 eral sense, along with wealth and political office. Many of these wealthy and powerful aristocratic families continue to exist today, and most of the District Heads and other important political figures are members of such families.

Although the controlling leadership of Kanuri society today can still be traced directly to the aristocracy of former times and still bears many of its characteristics, the system is no longer as stable and as self-perpetuating as it formerly